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FAITH, BELIEF, AND CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I solve a puzzle generated by three conflicting claims about the relationship between faith, belief, and control: according to (1) the Identity Thesis, faith is a type of belief, and according to (2) Fideistic Voluntarism, we sometimes have control over whether or not we have faith, but according to (3) Doxastic Involuntarism, we never have control over what we believe. To solve the puzzle, I argue that the Identity Thesis is true, but that either (2) or (3) is false, depending on how we understand “control.” I distinguish two notions of control: direct intention-based control and indirect reflective control. I argue that though we have direct intention-based control over neither belief nor faith, we have indirect reflective control over each of them. Moreover, indirect reflective control helps explain how we can be held accountable for each.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I solve a puzzle about the nature of faith. Here are three common views about the connections between belief, faith, and control:

- (1) *Identity Thesis*: Faith is a kind of belief.
- (2) *Doxastic Involuntarism*: We never have control over what we believe.
- (3) *Fideistic Voluntarism*: We sometimes have control over whether or not we have faith.

Though each is well-motivated, together they form an inconsistent triad. So, we must abandon at least one of them. Call this the *Control Puzzle*.

I aim to solve this puzzle by arguing that (1) is true, but either (2) or (3) is false depending on how we understand “control.” I distinguish two notions of control: direct intention-based control and indirect reflective control. Once we clarify the sort of control we have over faith and belief, it becomes clear that we have the *same* kind of control over each: while we

have indirect reflective control over both faith and belief, we have direct intention-based control over neither. I proceed by addressing each thesis in turn. In § 1, I argue for the Identity Thesis and defend it from objections. In § 2, I provide the motivation for thinking that Doxastic Involuntarism is true, provided that we understand doxastic control as direct intention-based control, which is a form of control that we have over our actions. In § 3, I provide the strongest motivation for thinking that under that same interpretation of control, Fideistic Voluntarism is also true. In brief, positing this control helps explain two main practices we regularly engage in with respect to faith. However, I then mount an argument against the view that we have direct intention-based control over whether we have faith, which leaves us with the need to explain these practices some other way. In § 4, I offer this explanation by defending the view that we have indirect reflective control over whether we have faith. Thus, the tension between the

three theses that generate the Control Puzzle is resolved when we properly disambiguate the sort of control at issue.

Before I proceed, let me clarify that the sense of faith that I'm concerned with is faith as an attitude or mental state rather than a set of doctrines or an ideology. In particular, I focus on *propositional faith*—faith that *p*. This is the sort of faith at issue when we say, for example: "She has faith that her son will do the right thing." "He has faith that he'll survive." "I have faith that God exists." My discussion applies to both religious and nonreligious faith. Propositional faith is distinct from *objectual faith*, which is having faith *in* a person or object.¹ It's also distinct from being *faithful* or *keeping faith* with someone. Though these forms of faith are all connected in interesting ways, I limit discussion to propositional faith, because such faith is plausibly a more basic unit of faith than the other forms.² Also, the Identity Thesis is most plausible for propositional faith.

I. THE IDENTITY THESIS

I begin with the Identity Thesis, according to which faith is a kind of belief. In what follows, I explain the thesis in more detail, show how it has figured in the literature on faith and belief thus far, and defend it from an objection.

As mentioned above, I conceive of faith, like belief, as a mental state. A prominent way to individuate mental states is in terms of their functional roles. Beliefs are different than say, desires or wishes, because beliefs function differently than desires and wishes. According to this sort of analytic functionalism about mental states, to claim that faith is a type of belief is to claim that any state that plays the functional role of faith also plays the functional role of belief.³ For all *x*, if *x* is a faith-state, then *x* is a belief-state. Alternatively, we might say that faith is a determinate of the determinable, belief.

Let me offer three important clarifications of the Identity Thesis to avoid confusion. *First*, while every faith-state is a belief-state, it's not the case that according to the Identity Thesis, every belief-state is a faith-state. To illustrate via analogy, faith is to belief what dogs are to animals: while every dog is an animal, it is not the case that every animal is a dog. It's important to recognize that the Identity Thesis is not claiming that belief is sufficient for faith. It's simply claiming that any state that plays the faith role must include the state that plays the belief role.

Second, the Identity Thesis does not claim that faith is *merely* a kind of belief; instead, the thesis is consistent with the claim that faith is a kind of belief *inter alia*. In particular, it's likely that propositional faith is also a type of pro-attitude, such as a desire.⁴ If I hate the idea of my preferred third-party candidate losing the presidential election, I can hardly be said to have faith that she will lose, even if I believe that she will. These types of cases support the view that a person has faith that *p* only if she has some kind of pro-attitude toward the proposition *p*. Additionally, one might hold that a person has faith that *p* only if she has some kind of intention to act as if *p* were true. In that case, having faith that *p* is also, *inter alia*, a kind of intention. For the purposes of this paper, I remain neutral with respect to the relationship between faith and other attitudes and mental states. I focus on the relationship between faith and belief, as stated in the Identity Thesis.⁵

Third, the Identity Thesis is neutral with respect to the specific belief that faith is. Thus faith that *p* might be identified with belief that *p*, where one believes the proposition that one has faith in. Alternatively, faith that *p* might be identified with the belief that *p* is likely or more likely than other competing propositions.

The Identity Thesis makes sense of claims that are often made about the relationship between faith and belief in the philosophical

and theological literature on faith, as well as various claims made by non-philosophers. According to what Daniel Howard-Snyder calls the “Common View” of faith (2013, p. 357), belief is a necessary condition for faith or else faith is partly constituted by belief. But the necessity claim and the constitution claim are each mysterious in a way that the Identity Thesis, as I understand it, is not. In particular, if we claim that belief is a necessary condition for faith, then it seems we have to posit a necessary connection between two distinct existences—a faith mental state and a belief mental state. But it’s unclear what a faith-state and a belief-state are, not to mention exactly *how* they are related.⁶ As for constitution, we know what it is for a material entity to be fully or partly constituted by another material entity. But it’s not at all clear what the analogous constitution or composition relation would be in the case of mental states: faith is not literally composed of belief like a statue is composed of clay.⁷ Fortunately, the Identity Thesis captures the idea that there’s a necessary connection between faith and belief without positing necessary connections between distinct existences. And it captures the idea that faith has belief as a constitutive part without relying on the analogy with material constitution.⁸

Something like the Identity Thesis is widely endorsed. In philosophical writing, Richard Swinburne attributes the first form of a view like the Identity Thesis to Thomas Aquinas, and calls it the Thomist view.⁹ William Alston attributes the emphasis on cognitive elements of faith in the literature on religious faith to the first Vatican Council and John Locke, in addition to Aquinas. Alston quotes Aquinas as saying: “The act of faith is an act of *the intellect assenting* to divine truth at the command of the will moved by the grace of God”; and he quotes Locke as characterizing faith as “*the assent to any proposition*, not thus made out by the deductions of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming

from God, in some extraordinary way of communication.”¹⁰ Insofar as the mental assent referenced in these passages bears similarity to the cognitive element of judgment involved in belief, these characterizations of faith can be used to articulate the view that faith is a type of belief.¹¹

In addition to various philosophers, many Western theologians writing on the nature of religious faith also presuppose the view that faith is a type of belief.¹² For example, in the Christian tradition, to have faith in God is, *inter alia*, to believe that God exists, which also may involve believing various propositions concerning the nature of God; and the sort of faith that is necessary for human salvation involves believing particular propositions about God’s plan and the person and work of Jesus.¹³

Another strand in both philosophical and non-philosophical literature that connects faith and belief is the idea that the essence of faith is belief based on poor grounds. Howard-Snyder cites as evidence Alex Rosenberg, “faith is by definition belief in the absence of evidence,” and Richard Dawkins, “faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence” (quoted in Howard-Snyder 2013, pp. 368–369). Many of those we might think of as “the folk” take faith to consist in belief of this sort as well. The Wikipedia entry on faith (edited by the people for the people) cites dictionary.com in its definition of faith as “belief that is not based on proof.”¹⁴ Though this doesn’t go quite as far as Mark Twain, who is often quoted in recent faith literature as saying that “faith is believing what you know ain’t so,” the idea is similar in spirit: at least part of what defines faith is its essential connection with a particular kind of belief, namely, unjustified belief. Indeed, many challenges to religious faith object to it on the grounds that faith is a type of epistemically irrational belief.¹⁵

So we have seen that the Identity Thesis is commonly presupposed. But why should we

think that it is true? That is, why think that all faith states are belief states? I now turn to a defense of the Identity Thesis.

To begin, if we assume analytic functionalism, then what it is to be a mental state of kind *K* is to play the *K*-role with respect to other mental states, perceptions, and behavior. Each mental state has a functional profile that distinguishes it from other mental states. Accordingly, what it is for a mental state to be a belief is to play the belief-role, and what it is for a mental state to be faith is to play the faith-role. To say that one particular mental state *A* is a kind of mental state *B* is to say that the functional profile of *A* includes the functional profile of *B*. That is, anything that satisfies the functional criteria for being *A* also satisfies the functional criteria for being *B*. This is exactly what we find with the mental states of faith and belief. When we consider the faith-role, we find that the functional profile of the person who has faith that *p* includes the functional profile of the person who believes that *p*.¹⁶ When a person has faith that *p*, she has settled the matter in a way that is reflected in, or indicated by, her feelings, her other attitudes, and her actions. She also tends to use *p* as a premise in her practical and theoretical reasoning. The same is true of the person who believes that *p* is true: she has settled the matter in a way that's reflected in her feelings, her other attitudes, her actions, and her reasoning.

Consider some examples: a person who has faith that she will do really well on her piano performance tends to be very calm and collected prior to the performance. So also if she *believes* that she will do well. The person who has faith that helping people is its own reward will tend to help people a lot. So also if she believes that helping people is its own reward. The idea here is that a person with faith that *p* is committed to the truth of *p* in a way that is reflected in her other mental states and her behavior. This same commitment is true of belief. We therefore have reason to hold that

faith is a type of belief. The mental states that play the faith-role include the mental states that play the belief-role. Therefore, the Identity Thesis is true: faith is a type of belief.

Despite this, some have advocated that we give up on the view that faith that *p* requires any kind of belief regarding *p*'s truth and instead opt for some other "weaker" cognitive attitude. For example, William Alston (1996) substitutes acceptance that *p* for belief that *p*. Daniel Howard-Snyder (2013) advocates the view that while faith that *p* requires what he calls a positive cognitive stance toward *p*, belief is not the only cognitive attitude that can satisfy this requirement; nondoxastic attitudes, including acceptance and assumption, can also do the job. Daniel McKaughan (2013) similarly advocates that faith that *p* is compatible with a wide range of what he calls epistemic opinions—"opinions formed solely with respect to considerations that one takes to bear on the truth or falsity of a proposition" (p. 117). Such opinions include belief, but also include "trusting acceptance" and "hopeful affirmation" (McKaughan 2013, p. 117). Alston, Howard-Snyder, and McKaughan are each motivated in part by their view of the relationship between faith and *doubt*. The thought is that doubt seems incompatible with belief but compatible with faith.

For example, Howard-Snyder describes a case of a man in the wilderness, Captain Morgan, who's bitten by a rattlesnake and must decide which direction to go to get help. Morgan's maps don't give him any reason to favor backtracking over forging ahead (or vice versa), but he slightly prefers forging ahead. So, though he's in doubt about whether help lies ahead, he stumbles forward on the assumption that it does (2013, p. 364). Howard-Snyder thinks Captain Morgan is aptly described as having faith that help lies ahead, and yet Morgan fails to believe it—he merely assumes it. Alternatively, Daniel McKaughan appeals to the case of Mother Teresa, who despite reporting experiences of

great doubt concerning the existence of God, is considered by many to have had great faith in God (2013, p. 106). In response, notice that there are many forms of doubt: a person might doubt that *p*, doubt whether *p*, be in doubt about whether *p*, or have doubts about *p*.¹⁷ When we examine the relationship between faith, belief, and these forms of doubt, I think we find that both faith that *p* and belief that *p* are equally compatible with some forms of doubt, and equally incompatible with other forms of doubt. Thus, we should not conclude that the relationship between faith and doubt entails that faith is not a type of belief.

Consider belief. Belief that *p* does not require certainty that *p*, so, any form of doubt that simply refers to lack of certainty is compatible with belief. For example, if I believe that *p* and yet experience a moment of doubt concerning its truth or concerning the strength of my evidence for *p*, I do not thereby cease to believe that *p* in that moment. Believing that *p* is compatible with what we might call *weak doubt*—any form of doubt that involves a mere lack of certainty. So the fact that faith is also compatible with weak doubt does not impugn the claim that faith is a type of belief.

However, belief is *not* compatible with what we might call *strong doubt*—doubt that lowers a person's credence below the threshold required for belief. For example, the strongest form of doubt—namely, doubt that *p*—is much more robust than simply lacking full certainty about *p* or having a moment of uncertainty about its truth. The functional profile of the person who doubts that *p* includes features that are excluded from the functional profile of the person who believes that *p*. Doubt that *p* tends to issue in fear that the thing one wants to happen or hopes will happen will *not* happen. For example, if I doubt that the Packers will beat the Bears, then I will tend to feel anxious when they're down a couple touchdowns. I will feel nervous that their current performance and score confirm that they won't win. I might get upset

or depressed. But if I believe that the Packers *will* win, I will not have these anxieties and fears.

But now notice that the functional profile of the person with faith that the Packers will win aligns with the profile of the person who believes it, not the profile of the person who doubts it. Indeed, faith seems to engender the opposite of anxiety and fear—the person with faith that *p*, who would otherwise fear that not *p*, rests more calmly in her confidence that *p*. Though strong doubt is incompatible with belief that *p*, it is also incompatible with faith that *p*.¹⁸ Various common locutions also support this. A common response to a friend with strong doubt might be to ask “Why did you doubt me? You should have had faith that I would be there.” With respect to religious faith, phrases such as “O ye of little faith, why did you doubt?” imply that to the extent that one has this doubt, one lacks faith.

Of course, faith plausibly comes in degrees—a person might have weak or strong faith. If my faith that my husband will remain faithful is weak, then I will tend to be more anxious when he's out to unknown places, or at least more anxious than I would be if I had strong faith. But even so, it's plausible to think that belief also comes in degrees. If I'm very confident in the belief that my husband is faithful, I will have very little, if any, anxiety during his late night unknown outings; the less confident I am, the more anxiety I'll tend to feel. So, again, faith and belief seem equally compatible or equally incompatible with particular forms of doubt. Therefore, I conclude that considerations concerning the relationship between faith and doubt do not impugn the Identity Thesis. We should maintain the view that faith is a type of belief.

2. DOXASTIC INVOLUNTARISM

We turn to the thesis of Doxastic Involuntarism—that we never have control over what we believe.¹⁹ This view gains support from both philosophers and non-philosophers

alike. Of course, there are many ways to understand what it is for something to be voluntary—there are many senses of control. So it's important to clarify how we should understand Doxastic Involuntarism. One plausible way to interpret the thesis is by contrasting our control over belief with our control over our actions. It seems that we can decide or choose to act in a way that we cannot choose to believe. Call the sort of control that we have over our actions *direct intention-based control*. An agent has direct intention-based control over ϕ -ing just in case she can ϕ directly as the result of an intention to ϕ . William Alston (1988) has famously and persuasively argued that we lack this control over our beliefs. If an agent has direct intention-based control over belief, then she has the ability to believe that p as a result of a specific intention to believe that p , which she carries out either immediately just by believing p or fairly immediately by performing other actions in one uninterrupted session, that results in her believing p . However, we cannot believe that the capital of Hawaii is Croatia immediately as a result of an intention to believe it, nor can we manage to believe this by performing other actions in one uninterrupted session that results in the belief. If we try it, we simply don't succeed (Alston 1988, p. 263). Contrast this with our control over action: we *can* clap our hands together immediately as a result of an intention to do so, and we *can* bake a cake in one uninterrupted session by performing other actions in service of baking the cake.

While Alston argues that we lack direct intention-based control over our beliefs as matter of contingent fact, some have argued that this inability is a matter of necessity.²⁰ For example, Pamela Hieronymi (2006) argues that we lack what I've called direct intention-based control over belief because belief is what she calls a commitment-constituted attitude: "To believe that p is to be committed to p as true—to take p to be true in a way that

leaves one answerable to certain questions and criticisms" (2006, p. 50). For example, if I believe that brewing coffee in a Chemex is superior to brewing it in a coffeemaker, then I can appropriately be asked why I believe this, and I can appropriately be criticized if I'm wrong about the considerations I took to bear on the superiority of the Chemex. The commitment-to-truth that constitutes belief distinguishes it from action because performing an action is not a commitment to truth but rather a commitment to the worth of the action in question. While an agent can perform an action for any reason taken to count in favor of the worth of the action, one cannot believe that p for any reason taken to count in favor of the worth of the belief. Instead, one can only believe that p —that is, commit to the truth of p —for reasons one takes to count in favor of the truth of p .²¹ In this way, Hieronymi argues that necessarily, given the nature of belief, we do not have the same control over belief that we have over action.

So, if we understand Doxastic Involuntarism as the thesis that we lack direct intention-based control over what we believe, then the thesis is true. We have strong reasons to maintain that belief is an attitude over which we lack direct intention-based control—a form of control we have over our actions. Alston's considerations support this view as a contingent fact. And if Hieronymi's account is correct, the reason we lack direct intention-based doxastic control is because we cannot believe that p on the basis of any reason taken to count in favor of p independently of counting in favor of the truth of p . To maintain otherwise would be to accept that we can believe that, for example, Barack Obama is the Prime Minister of Norway for reasons taken to be independent of the truth. But we shouldn't accept this.

3. FIDEISTIC VOLUNTARISM

We now turn to our control over faith: many philosophers and theologians think that faith

is voluntary—that is, that we sometimes have control over whether or not we have faith.²² This is what I've called Fideistic Voluntarism. But again there are many senses of control, so to evaluate Fideistic Voluntarism, we must specify the sense of control at issue. When it comes to faith, I think the idea that we can choose to have faith just as we can choose to act is much more appealing than when it comes to belief. In particular, I see two main motivations for accepting Fideistic Voluntarism understood in terms of direct intention-based control; one motivation pertains to the way in which we direct others to have faith, and the other pertains to how people are held accountable for faith. I present these two motivations in what follows. However, afterward, I will argue that we do *not* in fact have direct intention-based control over whether we have faith. This leaves us with the burden of explaining these two motivations some other way.

First, consider some ways in which people talk about propositional faith in everyday discourse: we encourage a student about to perform a violin solo before a large audience to have faith that she'll do a great job; we exhort a patient in physical therapy to have faith that she'll regain full usage of her arm; we tell a person who's feeling very down to "have faith that things will not always be this way," and so on. Sometimes people merely suggest or recommend that others have faith. Other times they strongly exhort them or even command them to: think of one spouse shouting to the other after a long argument: "Just have faith that I'll do it!" In any case, whether merely a suggestion or a command, the speech acts presuppose in some sense that the agent in question has some kind of control over having the faith that is being encouraged, commanded, or what have you.

The way that many people encourage others to have propositional faith is very similar to the way that people encourage others to act in various ways. Just as I might tell someone

to take a vacation when she's been working too hard, so also I might tell someone to have faith that she'll do great when she's been worrying too much about her upcoming performance review. Insofar as suggestions and commands to have faith bear similarity to suggestions and commands to act, this is some reason to think that faith is under our control in the same way that action is. At the very least, propositional faith needs to be under our control in a way that would make sense of the fact that people often encourage others to have it. If faith is *not* under our control *at all*, then there is pressure to explain why encouragement of others in the ways listed above is not somehow inappropriate or misguided.²³

The second common practice that presupposes that we have a control over faith similar to our control over action is that we hold people accountable for having and lacking faith in the same way that we hold people accountable for their actions. In particular, we often blame others for their faith if having such faith has negative consequences of some kind. For example, in the 2012 movie *Stuck in Love*, Samantha blames her father for maintaining faith that his ex-wife will return to him even after she's remarried. Samantha resents her father for not giving up his faith, given that it's ruining his emotional health and his relationship with her and others. Also, as I briefly mentioned in § 1, some religious faith is often objected to on the grounds that it's irrational and even dangerous. While this sometimes amounts merely to a form of criticism or negative evaluation, many times it takes the form of blaming the person for such faith.

Additionally, many Western religious traditions maintain that faith is an integral part of a person's salvation. According to certain religions, the quality of a person's afterlife depends (partly or wholly) on whether she has faith that God exists. The Christian religious tradition takes God to have commanded faith

as a prerequisite for salvation; in order to be saved, one must have faith in God and faith that various things God has said are true.²⁴ So a lot hangs on whether a person has faith. One way to explain why it's not unfair for God to hold us accountable for whether we have faith is to maintain that we have control over whether we have faith just as we have control over whether we do the right thing.

So we have two major practices regarding faith that seem to presuppose that we sometimes have control over whether or not we have faith and, in particular, that this control is the same sort of control that we have over our actions: the practice of directing people to have faith in various ways and the practice of holding people accountable for their faith. The sort of control we have over our actions helps explain the legitimacy of holding people accountable for their actions. So, in order to help explain the legitimacy of directing and holding people accountable for their faith, one might reasonably hold that we have this same type of control over whether we have faith.

However, in order to have direct intention-based control over whether we have faith, faith needs to be the sort of thing that an agent can have directly as a result of an intention, just as performing an action is the sort of thing that an agent can do directly as a result of an intention. Since having direct intention-based control over our actions means that we can perform an action for any reason that counts in favor of so acting, then similarly, having direct intention-based control over faith would mean that we can generate faith for any reason that counts in favor of such faith. Borrowing Hieronymi's framework for understanding commitment-based attitudes, as discussed in § 2, agents would need the ability to commit to having faith for any reason bearing on the goodness or worth of having faith. After all, we can commit to acting for any reason that counts in favor of the goodness or worth of so acting. But *can* we decide to have faith for

such reasons? I think that examining in detail how we come to have faith reveals that we cannot.

Consider a case in which you suspect that your spouse isn't working very hard to find a new job—you worry that he or she is just being lazy. But you're convinced by the marriage therapists that it really is better for your relationship that you have faith that your spouse *is* working hard. Here, you have a reason that counts in favor having such faith, but which is independent of any considerations in favor of the truth of the content of such faith. Can you thereby generate faith that your spouse is in fact working hard? It seems not. Of course, you could learn more about how your spouse is spending time, and try to gain more evidence about his or her mind-set. Or you could try to convince yourself one way or the other regardless of the evidence by just trying to never think about your spouse's work ethic. But either way, simply being convinced of the value of having faith in your spouse's work ethic does not seem sufficient to get you to have faith. Reflection on this case reveals that we lack direct intention-based control over faith.

Notice that if we could have faith on the basis of considerations that bear on the value of having faith, then we should be able to generate or maintain faith that *p* even if we disbelieve that *p*. We could also generate faith that *p* even if we didn't desire *p*, for example, if we hated the idea of *p* being true. Our ability to have faith would be like our ability to imagine that *p*. This is something we can do for any consideration that bears on the goodness of doing the imagining that *p* regardless of the truth or desirability of the content of the imagining. But faith that *p* is incompatible with disbelieving *p*, and it also seems incompatible with not desiring *p*.²⁵ So we cannot have faith simply on the basis of considerations that bear on the goodness of having such faith, just as we cannot believe something simply on the basis of

considerations that bear on the goodness of having the belief.

4. SOLVING THE PUZZLE

Let's pull together the strands of the preceding three sections. The Control Puzzle is generated when we maintain that (1) faith is a kind of belief, and that (2) we sometimes have control over whether we have faith, but that (3) we never have control over what we believe. The sort of control we've been considering with respect to both faith and belief is direct intention-based control—control we have over our actions. When Fideistic Voluntarism and Doxastic Involuntarism are each understood in terms of direct intention-based control, they generate an inconsistency in combination with the Identity Thesis. However, I've argued in the previous section that we do *not* in fact have direct intention-based control over faith—that is, Fideistic Voluntarism understood in terms of direct intention-based control is false. This resolves the tension of the Control Puzzle. But it leaves us with the difficulty of explaining the legitimacy of encouraging people to have faith and of holding people accountable for their faith.

Moreover, the problem gets worse when we realize that we *also* engage in these practices with respect to *belief*. We direct and encourage people to believe in certain ways, just as we direct and encourage them to act in certain ways. We also blame people for their beliefs, as when, for example, people believe things that are unjustified or irrational, or fail to believe what they have sufficient reason to believe. While, of course, a great deal more must be said about this phenomenon, suffice it to say that such practices are likely to be illegitimate unless agents have the right kind of control over their beliefs.

Fortunately, I will argue in what follows that we *do* have a form of control over our beliefs that helps explain the legitimacy of directing people with regard to their beliefs and the legitimacy of holding them accountable

for their beliefs. After I articulate this control, I will argue that we also have such control over whether we have faith.

Consider that we are often able to influence what we believe by critically reflecting on the reasons and evidence for various beliefs. We can execute intentions to critically reflect on the basis of our currently held beliefs or on potential reasons for acquiring new beliefs. And when we do so, we make a positive epistemic difference to what we believe; engaging in reflection can help us believe correctly. Call this form of control *indirect reflective control*. An agent has indirect reflective control over whether she believes that *p* just in case she can actively engage in critical reflection that causally influences whether or not she holds the belief that *p*. While indirect reflective control involves our intentions, such control differs from intention-based doxastic control in the following way: intention-based doxastic control involves controlling our beliefs by carrying out intentions to believe specific propositions, whether directly or indirectly, which is something we cannot do in all or most cases. Indirect reflective control involves carrying out intentions to engage in various reflective activities, which in turn, causally influences whether we believe that *p*. This is something we *can* do, giving us influence-based control over our beliefs.²⁶ Therefore, if we understand Doxastic Involuntarism in terms of this sort of control, then the thesis is false: it's not the case that we never have control over what we believe because we sometimes have indirect reflective control over what we believe.

Indirect reflective control helps us make sense of the legitimacy of blaming individuals for their beliefs despite the fact that we clearly do not have the same kind of control over our beliefs that we have over our actions.²⁷ The upshot is that intention-based control is not the only type of control that helps explain the legitimacy of practices like blame.

Now consider faith. Though we lack direct intention-based control over whether we have faith, we can still explain the legitimacy of directing and holding people accountable with respect to faith if we have indirect reflective control over whether we have faith. Assume, for the purposes of illustration, that faith is a kind of belief, a kind of desire, and a kind of disposition to act, such that *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* believes that *p*, desires that *p*, and is disposed to act as if *p*.²⁸ Though we cannot believe that *p* as a direct result of an intention to believe that *p*, we can carry out intentions to reflect on our reasons for believing that *p*, and doing so influences whether or not we have the belief. The same is plausibly true of desire: though we cannot desire that *p* as a direct result of an intention to desire *p*, we can carry out intentions to reflect on our reasons for desiring *p*, and doing so influences whether or not we have the desire.

Using this model, it's easy to see how it could be legitimate to encourage a person to have faith in cases where the agent already believes and desires *p*. The agent can just directly carry out an intention to act as if *p* upon being encouraged to have faith that *p*. I suspect that this is exactly what's going on in many of the cases where people urge another to have faith: the person already believes and desires *p*, but for some reason, she's not acting like it. Upon receiving the encouragement to have faith that *p*, the agent who believes and desires *p* can respond by reflecting on her belief and desire, which can help her realize that she also has reason to execute an intention to act as if *p*. Such reflection causally influences whether she has faith that *p*.

But it's also legitimate to encourage a person to have faith that *p* in a scenario in which the person has reason to believe that *p* and reason to desire that *p*, but hasn't yet recognized those reasons. Here, we might exhort her to have faith that *p*, and she can respond to that exhortation by reflecting on her reasons for believing and desiring *p*. In

other words, she can exercise indirect reflective control over whether she believes that *p*. And she can exercise a similar form of indirect control over whether she desires that *p*, by considering her reasons to desire it. She can also simultaneously carry out intentions to act as if *p*. Doing these things influences whether she has faith that *p*. In this way, agents have indirect reflective control over whether they have faith.

What about a case in which the person lacks the belief and desire, and there is no reason to believe and desire *p*? In such a case, it is *not* legitimate to encourage the person to have faith that *p*. This is true *even if* we add to the case that having faith that *p* would make the person feel happy or cause her to be liked by others or enable her success in some endeavor. Though such reasons count in favor of having faith, they do so independently of the reasons relevant to the mental states included in the functional profile of faith—belief that *p* and desire that *p*. If the agent has no reason to believe that *p* and no reason to desire that *p*, then she ought not to have faith that *p*. This makes sense. It accords with the fact that it seems legitimate to criticize people for having faith that *p* when *p* is unjustified or undesirable.

Note that there's a difference between reflecting on whether to have faith that *p* and reflecting on whether to believe that *p*. For faith, it's relevant to consider whether the object of one's faith is desirable. But when considering what to believe, it's not relevant to consider whether the object of one's belief (i.e., a proposition) is desirable. For the purposes of believing *p*, it doesn't matter whether *p* is desirable or not. But for the purposes of having faith that *p*, it does matter. So it's relevant to cite reasons pertaining to the goodness of *p* when encouraging a person to have faith that *p*. This is a way in which faith differs from belief and bears similarity to action, which is perhaps another reason people have thought that our control over

faith is like our control over action. However, as I've argued, our control over faith is more like our control over belief.

While it's legitimate to encourage and command people to have or abandon faith, it would be illegitimate to expect *immediate* compliance with the exhortation or to blame them for failing to comply immediately. But it would be perfectly legitimate to expect compliance mediated by carrying out whatever relevant intentions are necessary—intentions to reflect on one's reasons for believing and to reflect on one's reasons for desiring, as well as one's intentions to act as if *p*. So, even if we lack direct intention-based control over faith, we can still preserve the view that it's legitimate to encourage agents to have faith and hold them accountable for such faith, given that we have indirect reflective control over faith.

5. ANOTHER SOLUTION?

Before concluding, I want to clarify why I don't solve the Control Puzzle by appealing to a different kind of control that one might think we have over both faith and belief: *indirect intention-based control*. If an agent has indirect intention-based control over ϕ -ing, then she has the ability to execute an intention to ϕ by executing intentions to do various actions or activities over time.

I don't appeal to indirect intention-based control to solve the Control Puzzle because, although it's plausible that we sometimes have this control over faith and belief, such control does not sufficiently explain the legitimacy of our practices of holding individuals accountable for these attitudes.²⁹ Individuals are held accountable for their beliefs and their faith in a wide variety of cases, but in many—perhaps even most—of those cases, the agents in question do not have indirect intention-based control over their beliefs or their faith. In order to have this control over a belief, an agent would need to be able to form an intention to believe that *p* for some

specific proposition, and then execute that intention by doing various things that result in her believing that *p*. For example, she might conduct an investigation to find only evidence that confirms *p*, hang around only people who believe that *p*, confidently assert to herself and others that *p* is true, and so forth. Although it's plausible that an agent could successfully carry out an intention to believe that *p* by these methods in at least some instances of belief, it seems that agents don't have widespread control over their beliefs in this sense, given that these methods can be fairly difficult to carry out successfully.³⁰ Moreover, exercising this control might lead to irrational beliefs, especially in cases in which one embarks on the process of producing a particular belief in oneself for reasons that are independent of the truth of the content of the belief. The situation is similar with respect to faith: if we choose to form an intention to have faith that *p* on the basis of considerations that support *having* the faith independently of supporting the truth or desirability of *p*, then it's unlikely that we can indirectly execute the intention. Suppose you form the intention to have faith that your spouse is working hard. If it's false that your spouse is working hard, then it will be difficult to carry out your intention as you continue to gather more evidence that your spouse is lazy.

In any case, regardless of how often we have indirect intention-based control over belief and faith, there is a principled reason why this form of control fails to adequately explain the legitimacy of holding agents accountable for these attitudes. Legitimate accountability for belief and for faith requires the capacity for reflection on the part of the agent being held accountable; otherwise the agent in question cannot understand and respond to the accountability. It would not make sense, for example, to blame a friend for failing to have faith that you'll keep your word if she can't understand and respond to the reasons supporting such faith. So, the control that

helps explain the legitimacy of holding individuals accountable for their attitudes must be reflective, rather than intention-based.³¹ If this is right, then appealing to indirect reflective control to solve the Control Puzzle has the virtue of both resolving the Control Puzzle *and* adequately explaining the practices that help motivate one of the claims of the Control Puzzle—Fideistic Voluntarism. Appealing to indirect intention-based control might resolve the Control Puzzle, but at the cost of saddling us with the problem of explaining the legitimacy of holding people accountable for their faith and belief. So, appealing to indirect reflective control is a better solution.

CONCLUSION

We began with the Control Puzzle: according to the Identity Thesis, faith is a type of belief, and according to Fideistic Voluntarism, we sometimes have control over whether or not we have faith, but according to Doxastic Involuntarism, we never have

control over what we believe. I argued that we should maintain the Identity Thesis, but then I argued that depending on the relevant notion of control, either we sometimes have control over both faith and belief, or we never have control over either. If the relevant control is direct intention-based control—the same control we have over action—then we never have control over whether we have faith *or* over what we believe. But if the relevant control is indirect reflective control, then we sometimes have control over whether we have faith *and* over what we believe. Moreover, I argued that having indirect reflective control over faith and over belief helps us best make sense of our practices of accountability with respect to each. The upshot is that we should be voluntarists in one sense, but not another, about both faith and belief. In the end, disambiguating the notion of control resolves the tension of the Control Puzzle.

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NOTES

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1. Robert Audi calls this type of faith "*attitudinal* faith" (2011, p. 294), but I find this term rather misleading given that propositional faith can also be considered an attitude.
2. As Lara Buchak observes, faith statements *typically* involve a proposition in some way: for example, when one has faith *in* a person, one plausibly has faith *that* the person is reliable or faith *that* the person will come through or *that* she will triumph, and so forth (2012, pp. 225–226). Additionally, insofar as one thinks that *belief-in* presupposes belief-that (i.e., propositional belief), one might think that the same is true for faith—that faith-in presupposes faith-that. For arguments that belief-in presupposes belief-that, see Kenny (1992, p. 66; 2007); Plantinga and Wolterstorff (1983, p. 18); Price (1965, p. 13); and Swinburne (1969).
3. See Lewis (1966; 1972) for more background on the sort of functionalism that I have in mind.

4. Even those who have fairly different views of faith overall seem to share the view that some sort of pro-attitude is essential to faith; see, for example, Adams (1995, pp. 88–89); Alston (1996, p. 12); Audi (2008, p. 97); and Howard-Snyder (2013, p. 360). Though, of course, not all views of faith require a pro-attitude. For example, one might hold the view that faith that *p* is a kind of belief based on testimony, without any requirement that the agent have a pro-attitude toward *p*.
5. It's worth noting that if faith is a type of desire or a type of intention, then it's likely there are similar control puzzles lurking. In other words, we can use identity theses concerning the relationship between faith and various other attitudes to generate control puzzles similar to the belief control puzzle that I focus on in this paper.
6. For more on the general problem of positing necessary connections between distinct existences, see Armstrong (1968) and Lewis (1972). See also Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (bk. 1, Part III, sec. XIV), from which Armstrong and Lewis draw their inspiration.
7. For more discussion of the relation between material constitution and identity, see Baker (1997).
8. The functionalist model of the relationship between faith and belief is similar to Sydney Shoemaker's functionalist model of the relationship between a first-order belief that *p* and the second-order belief that one believes that *p*: see Shoemaker (2009) in which he explicates in functionalist terms the constitutive relation between believing something and believing that one believes it.
9. Swinburne (2005, pp. 138–141).
10. See Alston (1996, p. 15); Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (II-II, Q. 2, Art. 9); and Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (IV, 18, 2; emphasis added).
11. However, Alston interprets "assent" in these passages to refer to mental acceptance (1996, p. 8).
12. See Kinghorn (2005) for a discussion of this presupposition in the Christian religious tradition; see Pojman (1986, pp. 157–158) for a discussion of the view held by ordinary people "in the pew" that adhering to the Christian faith involves having particular propositional beliefs.
13. According to McKaughan (2013, p. 103), similar claims are also found in Locke (1965).
14. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith>, and <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/faith> (both accessed January 10, 2017).
15. See Kvanvig (2013, pp. 109–110) for a discussion of some of these objections.
16. Or, as I noted earlier in the section, it might be that the functional role of faith that *p* includes the functional role of the belief that *p* is likely, or more likely than not, and so on, rather than the belief that *p*.
17. See Peels (unpublished manuscript) for a nice categorization of the various types of doubt, as well as an argument for which types are compatible with the various types of faith. See also Peels (2007).
18. Note that acceptance and assumption that *p* seem perfectly compatible with strong doubt that *p*. We can imagine Captain Morgan doubting that help lies ahead. But he's got to do something, so he assumes that help is ahead.
19. For simplicity, I've characterized this view in terms of belief, but the thesis of doxastic involuntarism can apply equally to other doxastic attitudes, such as disbelief and suspension of judgment.
20. See Hieronymi (2005; 2006; 2009). Other advocates of the view that given the concept of belief, we lack direct intention-based doxastic control, include Bennett (1990); Williams (1973); Setiya (2008); Scott-Kakures (1993); and Shah (2002).
21. Of course, one might be wrong about whether one's reasons for a belief actually count in favor of its truth; one might believe something for bad reasons. And it's often the case that agents can't justify

their beliefs with good truth-related reasons. But Hieronymi's point remains that one can only believe a proposition (i.e., be committed to its truth) for reasons that one takes to count in favor of the truth of the proposition.

22. See Swinburne (2005, pp. 264–268). For discussion, see Hartman (2011); and Kinghorn (2005).

23. Of course, a full characterization of what is going on when people say these kinds of things to others is much more complex. I merely want to note that since people act and speak in ways that seem to presuppose control over faith in a way similar to control over actions, this provides some reason for thinking that an account of control over faith must be similar to our account of control over action.

24. See Hartman (2011, p. 184). See also Kinghorn (2005).

25. Or at least faith that *p* is incompatible with not having *some* form of pro-attitude toward *p*.

26. One might wonder whether the causal influence discussed here is strong enough to count as control. But recall that we're trying to make sense of the legitimacy of our practice of doxastic blame, so the control we're interested in is that which satisfies the control condition for legitimate doxastic blame. Though influence-based control is causally weaker than intention-based control, it still suffices to satisfy this condition. Indeed, there are many things for which we are legitimately blameworthy, but over which we only have influence-based control, such as various emotions, desires, and character traits, as well as various states of affairs, like our health.

27. I argue extensively for this in Rettler (forthcoming).

28. This model is too simplistic, since, among other things, the belief in question might not be belief that *p* (but could instead be some other related belief). Similarly, the desire in question might not be desire that *p* but some other desire in virtue of which one cares about *p*, such as a desire to desire that *p*. But for the purposes of illustrating our control over faith, it will do just fine.

29. I defend this at length with respect to doxastic attitudes in Rettler (forthcoming).

30. See Hieronymi (2006, pp. 54–55) for an argument that it's possible we have indirect intention-based control, which she calls "managerial control," over *some* of our beliefs. And see Alston (1988, pp. 263–277) for more on the difficulty of exercising this kind of control over our beliefs.

31. See Rettler (forthcoming).

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